



JOSEPH R. BIDEN, III
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
820 NORTH FRENCH STREET
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE 19801

CONTACT JASON MILLER
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
PHONE (302) 577-8949
CELL (302) 893-8939
Jason.Miller@state.de.us

Media Release

May 17, 2011

Biden Announces New Initiative to Combat Neighborhood Crime

Landlord training beginning May 18 to focus on fighting crime at rental properties

Wilmington – As part of its ongoing efforts to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in Wilmington and throughout the state, Attorney General Beau Biden announced today that his office is conducting day-long training courses to give landlords the knowledge and tools they need to combat criminal activity on their properties and avoid legal sanctions under the state's Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act. The first training takes place May 18th; a second is scheduled for June 18th, and more are expected to follow.

"Even though landlords may not live in the neighborhood where they own rental property, they are members of that community and have responsibilities," said Attorney General Biden. "We're providing this training not only to give property owners the information they need to hold up their end of the bargain, but also to put them on notice that if they allow criminal behavior to take place on their properties we will take legal action against them."

This initiative addresses a growing pattern of criminal activity at rental properties in the City of Wilmington, where approximately half of its 32,000 properties are rentals. The vast majority of criminal nuisance complaints received in the city stem from rental properties whose owners often claim to be unaware of the illegal activity on-site. These landlords frequently fail to perform criminal background checks on their tenants, and often have deficient leases and rental applications, or none at all.

To proactively reduce crime in rental properties, the Attorney General's Office is holding day-long training seminars to ensure that property owners understand their responsibilities under the law and have the tools to not only be effective landlords, but responsible community members as well. The first training will be held Wednesday, May 18th in the Carvel State Office Building Auditorium in Wilmington. It will feature presenters from the Attorney General's Office, police departments, private legal practices, the JP Court, and security specialists. Presentations will cover topics including identifying gang and drug activity, criminal background screening, eviction proceedings, Fair Housing laws, City and State Nuisance property laws, and crime prevention through environmental design. The trainings are focused on landlords, but are open to anyone. While training is voluntary, failure to attend

or failure to abide by the suggestions will be factored into determining future courses of legal action against certain properties and their owners.

Landlords, tenants, and members of the community who have questions about this week's landlord training, or want to report a property to the Attorney General's office are encouraged to call the Nuisance Abatement Program at (302) 577-8345.

The Attorney General's Nuisance Abatement program uses the state's Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act to identify and investigate properties where drug and vice crime is permitted to flourish, and offers property owners the choice to abate the nuisance or be forced to defend themselves in court. The Attorney General's office identifies nuisance properties statewide through its own investigations and in cooperation with state and local police agencies, local authorities, civic associations, and neighborhood residents. To date, over 125 nuisances have been abated and nearly 400 properties remain on the Program's "watch list." Additionally, 16 properties have been shut down because they were found to present an immediate threat to the health, safety and welfare of the surrounding community.

#